

## Political Parties in Russia and the Tasks of the Proletariat<sup>[3]</sup>

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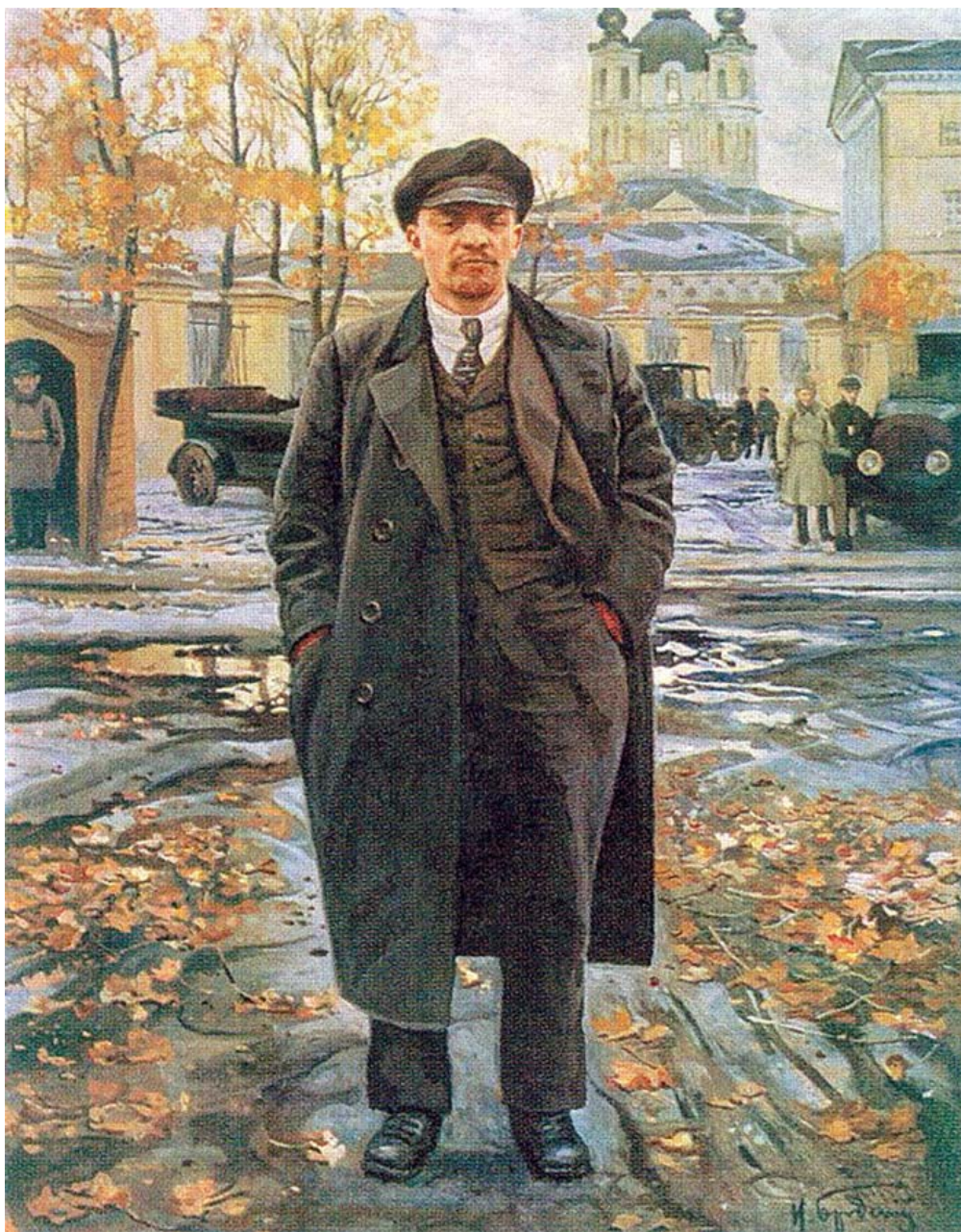
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**Translated:** Isaacs Bernard

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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

This pamphlet was written at the beginning of April 1917, before the coalition cabinet was formed. Since then much water has flown under the bridge, but the principal characteristics of the major political parties have held true in the course of all subsequent stages of the revolution—both during the coalition cabinet, which came into being on May 6, 1917, during the union between the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries in June (and July) 1917 against the Bolsheviks, during the Kornilov events, and during the October Revolution of 1917 and after it.

The correctness of the characteristic given to the principal parties and their *class foundations* has been borne out by the whole course of the Russian revolution. Today the progress of the revolution in Western Europe shows that there, too, the line-up of the principal parties is the same. The role of Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries is being played by the social-chauvinists of all countries (socialists in word and chauvinists in deed) as well as by the Kautskyites in Germany, the Longuetists in France, and so on.

**N. Lenin**

Moscow, October 22, 1918

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The following is an attempt to formulate, first, the more important and then the less important questions and answers characterising the present political situation in Russia and the way it is understood by the various parties.

## **QUESTIONS:**

### **1) WHAT ARE THE CHIEF POLITICAL PARTY GROUPINGS IN RUSSIA?**

#### **ANSWERS:**

- A. (to the right of the C.D.). Parties and groups to the right of the Constitutional-Democrats.
- B. (G.D.). The [Constitutional-Democratic Party](#) (Cadets, or the people's freedom party) and kindred groups.
- C. (S.D. and S.R.). The [Social-Democrats](#), the [Socialist- Revolutionaries](#) and kindred groups.
- D. ("[Bolsheviks](#)"). The party which properly should be called the Communist Party, but which at present is named the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party united under the Central Committee or, popularly, the "Bolsheviks".

### **2) WHAT CLASSES DO THESE PARTIES REPRESENT? WHAT CLASS STANDPOINT DO THEY EXPRESS?**

- A. (to the right of the C.D.). The feudalist landowners and the most backward sections of the bourgeoisie (Capitalists).
- B. (G.D.). The bourgeoisie as a whole, that is, the capitalist class, and the landowners who have become bourgeois, i.e., who have become capitalists.
- C. (S.D. and S.R.). Small proprietors, small and middle peasants, the petty bourgeoisie, and that section of the workers which has come under the influence of the bourgeoisie.
- D. ("Bolsheviks"). Class-conscious proletarians, wage- workers and the poor peasantry (semi-proletarians) standing close to them.

### **3) WHAT IS THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOCIALISM?**

- A. (to the right of the C.D.) and B. (G.D.). Decidedly hostile, since it threatens the profits of the capitalists and landowners.
- C. (S.D. and S.R.). For socialism, but it is too early to think of it or to take any immediate practical steps for its realisation.
- D. ("Bolsheviks"). For socialism. The [Soviets](#) must immediately take all possible practicable steps for its realisation.<sup>[1]</sup>

#### 4) WHAT FORM OF GOVERNMENT DO THEY WANT AT PRESENT?

- A. (to the right of the C.D.). A constitutional monarchy, the absolute power of the bureaucracy and the police.
- B. (G.D.). A bourgeois parliamentary republic, i.e., the consolidation of the rule of the capitalists, while retaining the old bureaucracy and the police.
- C. (S.D. and S.R.). A bourgeois parliamentary republic, with reforms for the workers and peasants.
- D. ("Bolsheviks"). A republic of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', Peasants', and other Deputies. Abolition of the standing army and the police, who are to be replaced by the arming of the whole people; officials to be not only elective, but also displaceable; their pay not to exceed that of a competent worker.

#### 5) WHAT IS THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS RESTORATION OF THE ROMANOV MONARCHY?

- A. (to the right of the C.D.). They are for it, but act covertly and cautiously, for they are afraid of the people
- B. (C.D.). When the Guchkovs seemed to be a power, the Cadets were for putting a brother or the son of Nicholas on the throne; but when the people began to seem a power, the Cadets became anti-monarchist.
- C. (S.D. and S.R.) and D. ("Bolsheviks"). Decidedly opposed to restoration of the monarchy in any form.

#### 6) WHAT IS THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE SEIZURE OF POWER? WHAT DO THEY REGARD AS ORDER, AND WHAT AS ANARCHY?

- A. (to the right of the C.D.). If a tsar or some gallant general seizes power, that is God-given, that is order. All else is anarchy.
- B. (C.D.). If the capitalists seize power, even by force, that is order; to seize power against the capitalists would be anarchy.
- C. (S.D. and S.R.). If the Soviets alone seize all the power, that means a threat of anarchy. Let the capitalists keep the power for the time being, and the Soviets keep the "Contact Commission".<sup>[4]</sup>
- D. ("Bolsheviks"). All power must be in the hands of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', Peasants', Agricultural Labourers and other Deputies. All propaganda, agitation and the organisation of the millions must immediately be *directed* towards this end.<sup>[2]</sup>



## 7) SHOULD THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT BE SUPPORTED?

- A. (to the right of the C.D.) and B. (C.D.). Unquestionably, since it is the only government capable at this moment of safeguarding the interests of the capitalists.
- C. (S.D. and S.R.). It should, but on condition that it carries out its agreement with the Soviet and attends the meetings of the Contact Commission.
- D. ("Bolsheviks"). No; let the capitalists support it. Our job is to *prepare* the people for full and undivided power wielded by the Soviets.

## 8) FOR UNDIVIDED POWER OR DUAL POWER?

- A. (to the right of the C.D.) and B. (C.D.). For the undivided power of the capitalists and landowners.
- C. (S. D. and S. R.). For dual power. The Soviets to exercise "control" over the Provisional Government. It is bad to reflect whether control can be effective without power.
- D. ("Bolsheviks"). For the undivided power of the Soviets from the bottom up all over the country.

## 9) SHOULD A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY BE CONVENED?

- A. (to the right of the C.D.). No, for it might prejudice the landowners. You never know—the peasants in the Constituent Assembly may decide that the landowners ought to have their estates taken away from them.
- B. (C.D.). Yes, but without fixing a date. As much time as possible should be spent consulting professors of law; first, because, as Bebel said, jurists are the most reactionary people in the world; and, second, because the experience of all revolutions has shown that the cause of popular freedom is lost 'when it is entrusted to professors.
- C. (S.D. and S.R.). Yes, and as quickly as possible. A date must be fixed; we have already said so two hundred times at the meetings of the Contact Commission, and shall say so again tomorrow, for the last and two-hundred-and- first time.
- D. ("Bolsheviks"). Yes, and as soon as possible. But there is only one way to assure its convocation and success, and that is by increasing the number and *strength* of the Soviets and organising and *arming* the working-class masses. That is the only guarantee.

## 10) DOES THE STATE NEED THE USUAL TYPE OF POLICE AND A STANDING ARMY?

- A. (to the right of the C.D.) and B. (C.D.). It certainly does, for they are the only firm

guarantee of the rule of the capitalists; in case of need, as the experience of all countries has shown, the return from a republic to a monarchy is thus greatly facilitated.

C. (S.D. and S.R.). On the one hand, they are perhaps not necessary. On the other hand, is not so radical a change premature? However, we shall raise the matter in the Contact Commission.

D. ("Bolsheviks"). It definitely does not. The arming of the entire people must be proceeded with everywhere immediately and unreservedly, and they must be merged with the militia and the army. The capitalists must pay the workers for days served in the militia.

### **11) DOES THE STATE NEED A BUREAUCRACY OF THE USUAL TYPE?**

A. (to the right of the C.D.) and B. (C.D.). Most decidedly. Nine-tenths of them are the Sons and brothers of land owners and capitalists. They must continue to remain a privileged and, in practice, permanent body of people.

C. (S.D. and S.R.). It is hardly fitting to raise so hastily a question that was raised practically by the Paris Commune.

D. ("Bolsheviks"). It certainly does not. All officials and all and every kind of deputy must not only be elective, but displaceable at any moment. Their pay must not exceed that of a competent worker. They must be replaced (gradually) by the people's militia and its detachments.

### **12) SHOULD OFFICERS BE ELECTED BY THE SOLDIERS?**

A. (to the right of the C.D.) and B. (C.D.). No. That would be detrimental to the landowners and capitalists. If the soldiers cannot be pacified otherwise, they must be temporarily promised this reform, but it must be withdrawn at the earliest possible moment.

C. (S.D. and S.R.). Yes, *they should*.

D. ("Bolsheviks"). Not only must they be elected, but every step of every officer and general must be supervised by persons specially elected for the purpose by the soldiers.

### **13) IS IT DESIRABLE FOR THE SOLDIERS, ON THEIR OWN DECISION, TO DISPLACE THEIR SUPERIORS?**

A. (to the right of the C.D.) and B. (C.D.). It is distinctly harmful. Guchkov has already forbidden it. He has already threatened to use force. Guchkov must be supported.

C. (S.D. and S.R.). It is. But it is not clear whether they should be replaced before

the matter is taken up with the Contact Commission, or vice versa.

D. ("Bolsheviks"). It is desirable and essential in every way. The soldiers will obey and *respect* only elected authorities.

#### **14) FOR OR AGAINST THE PRESENT WAR?**

A. (to the right of the C.D.) and B. (C.D.). Decidedly for, because it yields the capitalists untold profits and promises to consolidate their rule by disuniting the workers and setting them against one another. We shall fool the workers by calling the war a war for national defence, the real object of which is to dethrone Wilhelm.

C. (S.D. and S.R.). In general we are opposed to imperialist wars, but 'we are willing to be fooled, and are prepared to call the support given to the imperialist war waged by the imperialist government of Guchkovs Milyukov and Co. "revolutionary defencism".

D. ("Bolsheviks"). We are decidedly against all imperialist wars and *all* bourgeois governments waging such wars, including our own Provisional Government; we are decidedly against "revolutionary defencism" in Russia.

#### **15) FOR OR AGAINST THE PREDATORY INTERNATIONAL TREATIES BETWEEN THE TSAR, GREAT BRITAIN, FRANCE, ETC. (FOR THE SUBJUGATION OF PERSIA, THE PARTITION OF CHINA, TURKEY, AUSTRIA. ETC.)?**

A. (to the right of the C.D.) and B. (C.D.). Absolutely and entirely *for*. At the same time, we must not publish these treaties, both because Anglo-French imperialist capital and its governments will not permit it, and because Russian capital cannot afford to reveal its shady affairs to the public.

C. (S.D. and S.R.). Against, but we still hope that with the aid of the Contact Commission and a series of "campaigns" among the masses, it may be possible to "influence" the capitalist government.

D. ("Bolsheviks"). Against. The whole point is to enlighten the masses as to the utter hopelessness of expecting anything in this respect from capitalist governments, and as to the necessity of the power being transferred to the proletariat and the poor peasants.

#### **16) FOR OR AGAINST ANNEXATIONS?**

A. (to the right of the C.D.) and B. (C.D.). If it is a question of annexations by the German capitalists and their robber chieftain, Wilhelm, we are against. If by the British, we are not against, for they are "our" Allies. If by our capitalists, who are forcibly keeping within the boundaries of Russia the peoples who were oppressed

by the tsar, we are *in favour*; we do *not* call that annexation.

C. (S.D. and S.R.). Against annexations, but we still hope it will be possible to secure even from the capitalist government a promise to renounce annexations.

D. ("Bolsheviks"). Against annexations. All promises on the part of capitalist governments to renounce annexations are a sheer fraud. There is only one method of exposing it, namely, to demand the liberation of the peoples oppressed by *their own* capitalists.

### **17) FOR OR AGAINST THE LIBERTY LOAN?**

A. (to the right of the C.D.) and B. (C.D.). Decidedly for, since it facilitates the conduct of the imperialist war, that is, a war to *determine* which group of capitalists shall rule the world.

C. (S.D. and S.R.). *For*, since the incorrect stand of "revolutionary defencism" forces us into this obvious departure from internationalism.

D. ("Bolsheviks"). Against, since the war remains an imperialist war, waged by the capitalists in alliance with the capitalists and in the interests of the capitalists.

### **18) FOR OR AGAINST THE CAPITALIST GOVERNMENTS ASCERTAINING THE PEOPLES' WILL TO PEACE?**

A. (to the right of the C.D.) and B. (C.D.). For, since the experience of the French republican social-chauvinists was excellent proof that the people can be fooled in this way; we can say anything we like, but in practice we shall keep the spoils seized from the Germans (their colonies), while depriving the German robbers of the spoils *they* have seized.

C. (S.D. and S.R.). *For*, since we have not yet relinquished a good many of the unfounded hopes placed by the petty bourgeoisie in the capitalists.

D. ("Bolsheviks"). Against, since the class-conscious workers place *no hopes whatever* in the capitalists, and it is our task to open the eyes of the masses to the futility of such hopes.

### **19) MUST ALL MONARCHIES BE ABOLISHED?**

A. (to the right of the C.D.) and B. (C.D.). No; the British, Italian and Allied monarchies generally must not be abolished, but only the German, Austrian, Turkish, and Bulgarian, since victory over them will multiply our profits.

C. (S.D. and S.R.). A certain "sequence" must be observed, and in any case we should begin with Wilhelm; as to the Allied monarchies, we had perhaps better wait a bit.



D. ("Bolsheviks"). No sequence can be established for revolutions. We must help *only* the revolutionaries *in deed* to abolish *all* monarchies in all countries without exception.

## **20) SHALL THE PEASANTS TAKE ALL THE LANDED ESTATES IMMEDIATELY?**

A. (to the right of the C.D.) and B. (C.D.) By no means. We must wait for the Constituent Assembly. Shingaryov has already explained that when the capitalists seize power from the tsar, that is a great and glorious revolution; but when the peasants take the land away from the landowners, that is arbitrary action.<sup>[5]</sup> Conciliation commissions must be appointed on which landowners and peasants shall be equally represented, while the chairmen shall be officials, that is, people drawn from among the capitalists and landowners.

C. (S.D. and S.R.). Better the peasants waited for the Constituent Assembly.

D. ("Bolsheviks"). All the land must be taken over immediately. Order must be strictly maintained by the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies. More grain and meat must be produced, and the soldiers better fed. Injury and damage to livestock, implements, etc., must in no case be permitted.

## **21) CAN WE LEAVE LAND DISPOSAL AND ALL RURAL AFFAIRS IN THE HANDS OF THE SOVIETS OF PEASANTS' DEPUTIES ALONE?**

A. (to the right of the C.D.) and B. (C.D.). The land owners and capitalists are generally opposed to full and undivided power being vested in the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies in the countryside; but if these Soviets are unavoidable, then we had better confine ourselves to them alone, for the rich peasants are also capitalists.

C. (S.D. and S.R.). For the present, perhaps, yes, although Social-Democrats "in principle" do not deny the necessity of a separate organisation for the agricultural wage-workers.

D. ("Bolsheviks"). We cannot confine ourselves to the general Soviets of Peasants' Deputies alone, for the wealthy peasants are also capitalists and are always liable to wrong or cheat the agricultural labourers, day-labourers, and poor peasants. Therefore separate organisations for these groups of the rural population must be set up immediately both within the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies and as separate Soviets of deputies from the agricultural labourers.

## **22) SHALL THE PEOPLE TAKE OVER THE LARGEST AND MOST POWERFUL CAPITALIST MONOPOLIES, THE BANKS, THE SYNDICATES OF MANUFACTURERS. ETC.?**

A. (to the right of the C.D.) and B. (C.D.). On no account, as this might injure the

landowners and capitalists.

C. (S.D. and S.R.). Generally speaking, we are in favour of transferring such organisations to the entire people, but it is too early just now to think of this or prepare for it.

D. ("Bolsheviks"). We must at once start *preparing* the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, the Councils of Bank Employees' Deputies, etc., for taking practical and practicable steps towards merging all banks into a single national bank, to be followed by the establishment of control by the Soviets of Workers' Deputies over the banks and syndicates, and then by their nationalisation, i.e., their transfer to the possession of the whole people.

### **23) WHAT KIND OF SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL IMPLEMENTING A FRATERNAL UNION OF THE WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES DO THE PEOPLES NOW NEED?**

A. (to the right of the C.D.) and B. (C.D.). Generally speaking, any kind of Socialist International is harmful and dangerous to the capitalists and landowners; but if the German Plekhanov, that is, Scheidemann, comes to an agreement and understanding with the Russian Scheidemann, that is, Plekhanov, and if they discover in each other vestiges of a socialist Conscience, then it were perhaps better for us capitalists to welcome *such* an International of *such* socialists who take the side of *their own* respective governments.

C. (S.D. and S.R.). We need a Socialist International that will unite everybody: the Scheidemanns, the Plekhanovs and the "Centrists", i.e., those who vacillate between social-chauvinism and internationalism. The greater the hotchpotch, the greater the "unity". Long live the great socialist unity!

D. ("Bolsheviks"). The peoples need only such an International as will unite the really revolutionary workers, who are capable of putting an end to this frightful, criminal slaughter of the peoples and of delivering humanity from the yoke of capital. Only people (groups, parties, etc.) like the German Socialist [Karl Liebknecht](#), who is now in a convict prison, only people who are resolutely fighting their *own* government, their *own* bourgeoisie, their own social chauvinists, their *own* "Centre", can and must establish immediately the International which the peoples need.

### **24) SHOULD FRATERNISATION AT THE FRONT BETWEEN SOLDIERS OF THE BELLIGERENT COUNTRIES BE ENCOURAGED?**

A. (to the right of the C.D.) and B. (C.D.). No, it is bad for the interests of the landowners and capitalists, as it is likely to hasten the liberation of humanity from their yoke.

C. (S.D. and S.R.). Yes, it is desirable. But we are not all fully convinced that such an

encouragement of fraternisation should be started immediately in all the belligerent countries.

D. ("Bolsheviks"). Yes, it is desirable and essential. It is absolutely essential to encourage immediately in all the belligerent countries attempts at fraternisation between the soldiers of *both* warring groups.

## 25) WHAT COLOUR BANNER WOULD BE IN CHARACTER WITH THE VARIOUS POLITICAL PARTIES?

A. (to the right of the C.D.). Black, for they are the real [Black Hundreds](#).<sup>[6]</sup>

B. (C.D.). Yellow, for that is the international banner of workers who serve capitalism willingly, heart and soul.

C. (S.D. and S.R.). Pink, for their whole policy is a rose-water one.

D. ("Bolsheviks"). Red, for this is the banner of the international proletarian revolution.

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This pamphlet was written at the beginning of April 1917. To the question whether it is out of date now, after May 6, 1917, after the formation of the "new", coalition, government, my answer is: No, for the Contact Commission has not really disappeared, it has merely moved to another room, which it shares with the gentlemen of the cabinet. The fact that the Chernovs and the Tseretelis have moved to another room has not changed their policy, nor the policy of their parties.

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## Notes

[1] For the nature of these steps, see questions 20 and 22. —*Lenin*

[2] Anarchy is the complete negation of State power, whereas the Soviets are *themselves* a state power. —*Lenin*

[3] This pamphlet was planned originally as a leaflet, owing to the fact that the Cadets, S.R.s and Mensheviks were making wide use of leaflets in their propaganda and pasted them up all over the town. Lenin believed that a Bolshevik leaflet explaining what every party was and what it stood for should be pasted alongside the anti-Bolshevik proclamations. The article was too long to be issued as a leaflet; it was published in the Helsingfors Bolshevik newspaper *Volna*, and then issued in pamphlet form by the Zhizn i Znaniye publishers in fifty thousand copies. The proprietors of the printing-press, who sympathised with the Cadets, held up publication, but with the help of the workers' committee the pamphlet was issued on July 4(17). Owing to the July events, however, it was hidden away in the publishers' warehouse. A few days later it began to circulate in the working-class quarters. The first edition sold out

quickly and, according to the testimony of V.D. Bonch-Bruyevich, a reprint was put out.

The pamphlet was issued with the following introductory text: "Explanation to the draft platform outlined by N. Lenin for discussion at meetings of the Bolsheviks. The printing of the draft itself has been held up owing to lack of printing facilities in Petrograd."

The pamphlet was published in English in the journal *The Class Struggle* (New York, November-December 1917, Vol. 1, No.4, pp. 49-59) as well as in *The New York Evening Post*, January 15, 1918.

A second edition of was published in Moscow in 1918 with a foreword by Lenin."

[\[4\]](#) [PLACEHOLDER.]

[\[5\]](#) [PLACEHOLDER.]

[\[6\]](#) [PLACEHOLDER.]

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